



February 8, 2016

Dear Team Tennessee,

Finding solutions to the opportunities and challenges facing our rural communities requires all of us to pull in the same direction as Team Tennessee. We have an encouraging update for you about the task force's work and your participation in the next phase.

The Task Force is committed to aligning public and private resources and offering new strategic initiatives to create transformative, holistic solutions in asset-based economic activities across rural Tennessee. Our goal is to implement statewide policies and programs that improve the economy in all rural communities so that fewer counties are at risk and zero counties are distressed.

In the first stage of the Task Force's work, we gathered government and private sector organizations with statewide networks and significant resources to catalogue existing efforts throughout the state to identify opportunities for joint ventures and ways to leverage current programs.

For the past several months, we have held stakeholder input sessions where local leaders across the State shared their ideas about how to make a stronger rural Tennessee. We heard from local elected officials, economic development professionals, chambers of commerce, higher education representatives, business owners, organization directors, and other local leaders from all parts of the state. We will be holding our final stakeholder input session in February.

With this additional stakeholder input, the Task Force will move toward finalizing a comprehensive strategic plan and implement initiatives to address key issues that impact rural Tennessee. In March, the Task Force will begin identifying priority areas and form committees to evaluate and develop goals and action steps. Committees will include Task Force Members and other stakeholders at the invitation of the committee chair.

Thank you for everything you do for our rural communities and we look forward to continuing to work with you to build a stronger rural Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Governor's Rural Task Force Co-Chairs

Commissioner Julius Johnson, Department of Agriculture
Commissioner Kevin Triplett, Department of Tourist Development
Commissioner Randy Boyd, Department of Economic and Community Development